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The Key to the Defence of the LORD PROVOST. Stoddart

To my L O R D P R O V O S T.

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meant it as a vindication of innocence, and it turns out a record of ingratitude. It cannot be denied, that you were promoted to the chair by Sir L—— D——, and you acknowledge yourself his enemy. It is most certain, that you solemnly engaged to support his interest; and it is obvious, that you have been active to overturn it. These facts, my Lord, it is impossible to reconcile with each other. Your paper is a narrative of guilt, and you have unfortunately become the historian of your own perfidy.

The friendship you promised to Sir L—— D—— was unlimited. This was your original concert; and you could not depart from it without treachery. He put your friendship to the test, by requiring that Mr Dalrymple should succeed you. You discovered its reality, by refusing him. You told him, that you had strengthened his interest, by adding new friends to it; yet these friends, you informed him, were hostile to his, and would not hear of Mr Dalrymple, whom he was engaged to support. You counted over these friends, and it appeared, that you had a majority against his party. You held out chains for your patron; and, affecting the

sovereignty of the borough, you hoped to reduce him to be the humble suitor of your greatness. He disdained to be your dependent. You threw off your hypocritical attachment. The perfidious friend became an open enemy. You received the countenance of the Duke of B—, and Sir L— D— was to struggle for political existence with the man whom he had promoted by his power, and trusted with his confidence.

You express your dissatisfaction with his friends; but, because his friends were disagreeable to you, it does not follow, that you should have opposed him. When he employed his influence to advance you to the chair, you knew, that you were to act with them. You knew that he could not forsake them without injustice! And you cannot have forgot, that when Mr Dalrymple resigned the promise in his favour to gratify your eagerness to serve Sir L— D—, it was understood that he was to succeed you.

Engaged to Sir L— D—, you had no title to speculate without restriction, and for yourself. Your interest, independent of his, was a blow to his influence. The scheme you avow, of annihilating his friends, was without his knowledge, destructive of his consequence, and in violation of your engagements. Your offer, of supporting him with *your* friends, if he would desert his *own*, was an insult to his understanding. The party you had formed, the studied concealment of your views, your pretended friendship, your visit at Ask-hall, your opposition to Mr Dalrymple, and your subsequent rupture with Sir L— D—, are all parts

of



of a whole. They mutually illustrate one another. They explain a settled project of ambition.

The alternative you proposed to yourself is open to the most superficial observation. If your offer had been accepted, you had Sir L—— D—— in fetters, and in servitude. You could meet the advances of another candidate for the representation. You could operate on the hopes of both, and expect impatiently the hour when you would surrender the borough to the highest bidder. If your offer was rejected, you had determined on immediate hostilities. The former part of the alternative did not happen. You embraced the latter; and when you left Aisk-hall, it was to act as an enemy.

These things, my Lord, even appear from your defence. The disguise under which you would cover them, is too transparent to deceive. You speak of the interest of the community; but you consulted your own advantage. For purposes of ambition, you renounced the friendship you had solicited, the engagements you had entered into, the trusts you had accepted. The consequences of your conduct will employ your scrutiny in the moments of leisure. The dying noise of your popularity will leave them to the reflections of your fellow-citizens. And, whatever airs of importance you may assume, you will wait your political dissolution, in anxiety and without hope, sorrowful and in repentance.

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